

518. COCHIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL [3rd August 1925]

Mr. E. IKKANDA WARIAR (*Urakam*).

I propose Mr. C. A. Kunjunni Raja for election to the Finance Committee of the House.

Mr. C. ITTIRAVI NAMBURI (*Antikkad.*)

ഞാൻ ഈ അഭ്യർത്ഥനയോടുകൂടിയാണ്.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi.*)

Sir, I beg to propose Mr. A. B. Salem as a member to be elected to the Finance Committee of this Council.

Mr. K. SANKARAN NAMBURI (*Cheruvirutti*).

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Messrs. C. A. Kunjunni Raja, C. A. Ouseph, and C. Achyuta Menon were declared by the President to be duly elected as members of the Standing Finance Committee of the Council, having secured, when balloted 24, 18 and 17 votes, respectively.

President.—We shall now resume the discussion on Mr. Salem's motion on the Distillery establishment.

Voting of Demands for Grants—(cont.)

Demand VI—Excise—3·13 lakhs.

Motion No. 18.

Mr. C. ACHYUTA MENON (*Mulakunnattukavu*).

Sir, as I have great sympathy with the subject matter of this motion, it is with great reluctance that I oppose it. Certain administrative considerations of a practical nature, however, leave me no other option. I subscribe generally to all that had been said by my friend, the Superintendent of Excise Revenue. I wish, however, to say a word about certain aspects of the question, which do not appear to have been sufficiently emphasised by my Hon'ble friend.

Total Prohibition is a counsel of perfection about which one may talk glibly, but it is not within the range of practical politics, at least in our generation. The difficulties in its way appear to be insuperable. A great deal of spade work, extending over a number of years, has to be done, before we can speak or think of total Prohibition as a practical proposition. The discussion of the subject, at the present stage, has nothing more than an academical interest. The progressive restriction of the production and distribution of arrack and toddy stands on a different footing, and is not so impracticable as Prohibition, but two antecedent

conditions have to be fulfilled, before Government can take any serious action in that direction. The first is that the people should be prepared for the reform, and the second, that we must have the co-operation of Travancore and Malabar.

The great majority of the people, who are addicted to drink in Cochin, are blissfully ignorant of its evils, of the moral and physical deterioration for which it is responsible. They know, of course, the pleasures of drink, but have no idea of its pains and penalties. (*Hear, hear*). What is required, under the circumstances, is that the people should be educated by propaganda work into a consciousness of the evils of alcoholism, and this can be best done, not by the Government, but by the leaders of the different communities in the State. The influence of the Church, especially of the Catholic Church, is very powerful among the Christians. If that influence and their wonderful organisation are used in this direction, a great improvement can be effected in a large section of the population. I understand that the Ezhuvas of Travancore have started a campaign against drink under the inspiration of their Great Guru and leader. If their brethren in Cochin will do likewise, another great section of the population can be gradually weaned from the lure of alcohol. If, by propaganda work of this kind, a substantial diminution in consumption can be gradually brought about, a diminution of which the unmistakable indication will be the progressive reduction of Excise revenue, then, the Government can and must take steps to place restriction on production, not only *pari passu* with, but in advance of, that diminution. If, on the other hand, when the ideas of the people remain what they are, the Government take any substantial steps to restrict tapping and distilling, and make the supply fall considerably short of the demand, the inevitable result will be illicit production on a large scale, which can be prevented to any appreciable extent only at a prohibitive cost. The only result of this will be to add to the pernicious effects of drink the demoralising ones of unlawful manufacture and traffic. We must clearly bear in mind that the Government can restrict only the supply and not the demand, while it is the demand that requires to be restricted, and this can be done only by the people.

Again, without the co-operation of Travancore and Malabar, it is next to impossible for Cochin to make any great chance in her Excise policy with any chance of success. The protection of Excise and other similar revenues had always been a matter of exceptional difficulty in Cochin on account of the length of its frontier, which is altogether out of proportion to its size. There are blocks of villages like Vellarappalli and its neighbours, which are entirely surrounded by Travancore, and there are also individual villages like Malayattur, Chennamangalam and Vadavukode, which are similarly surrounded. The larger block of the Chittur Taluk is surrounded on all sides by British territory, while the Nemmara block is similarly surrounded on three sides. The configuration of these isolated tracts and also of the rest of the State is so very irregular and diversified that it is no exaggeration to say that, though Cochin is only about one-fifth the size of Travancore, it has a greater length of frontier, to guard against smuggling than the sister State. To police such a length of frontier, to prevent smuggling from without, in the event of Cochin taking action single-handed, as well as to prevent illicit manufacture and sale within, we shall have to maintain a preventive force, at least, ten times as large as the present one, which means an additional expenditure of three or four lakhs of rupees a year. Such an addition to the expenditure, simultaneously with the sacrifice of revenue to the extent of eight or nine lakhs, is a contingency which cannot be contemplated with equanimity by a practical administrator, especially at a time when it is found extremely difficult even to balance the budget.

The futility of taking isolated action in matters of this kind is not an imaginary one, nor is it based on *a priori* considerations. In the beginning of the last century, tobacco was made an article of Government monopoly in the British Districts of Malabar and South Canara as well as in the States of Travancore and Cochin. For reasons which I have not been able to acquaint myself with, the monopoly was abolished in the British Districts in 1853, but Cochin did not follow their example, as she was deriving a large revenue from that source. But this revenue, which had averaged two and a quarter lakhs of rupees a year before the

abolition of the British monopoly, suddenly, fell to a third of that amount in 1854. Cochin still persevered in her attempts to maintain the monopoly, but found at last that the game was not worth the candle, and abolished the monopoly in 1865. The Excise policy or system of administration obtaining in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar had not always been uniform. This diversity had been a source of considerable administrative inconvenience, and often gave rise to mutual misunderstandings and even acrimonious correspondence. It was only by bringing the policy of the three States into line with each other, in the first decade of the present century, as the result of prolonged discussion and negotiation, that the Excise administration of our State ceased to present exceptional difficulties and inconveniences. No practical administrator could dream of disturbing the *status quo* and of pursuing single-handed a new line of policy.

In view of all these circumstances, I am decidedly of opinion that we cannot take isolated action in this connection with any chance of success. We can only mark time, till Travancore and Malabar make a serious move in this matter, and when they do move, we can and must keep step with them. If they take serious steps to place substantial restriction on the production and distribution of liquor, leading eventually to total Prohibition, we in Cochin can bring about that desirable consummation almost automatically. In the meantime, in the phrase rendered famous by Mr. Asquith, we can only "wait and see."

Mr. N. PADMANABHA MENON (*Cranganur*).

Sir, I shall confine my remarks only to the remarks made by the member for Mulakunnattukavu.

President.—Do you support or oppose the motion?

Mr. N. PADMANABHA MENON (*Cranganur*).

I support the motion, Sir. One of his reasons is that this is not a council of perfection. I submit, the mover of the motion did not ask for a policy of total Prohibition during the next year or, say, within the course of three years. What he wanted was that this House must definitely enunciate an Excise policy for the acceptance of this Government. Neither in the statement submitted to this House by the Finance

Member nor in the figures set forth on page 5, under the Head of Abkari and Ganja, do we find such a policy. I may be allowed to quote the figures.

The accounts under the head "Rent on independent toddy shops" for the year 1099 was Rs. 4,75,349. The budget estimate for the year 1100 was Rs. 4,75,650. The actual collection of 1100 was Rs. 4,59,645. And the amount budgetted for this year is Rs. 4,10,000. Again, under the head "Rent on independent arrack shops" for 1099 is Rs. 1,01,767. The budgetted amount for 1100 is Rs. 98,541, actuals Rs. 98,071 and the amount budgetted for the coming year is Rs. 88,100. Again, under Abkari and Ganja, "licenses for sale of foreign liquor", the accounts of 1099 show Rs. 6,415. The budgetted estimate of 1100 is Rs. 3,500, and the actuals Rs. 45,000, and the amount budgetted for next year is 3,000. Next, we come to licenses for tapping jag-gery and fermented toddy. Under "Fermented cocoanut toddy collections," accounts of 1099 show Rs. 1,40,177, the budgetted estimate for 1100 is 1,65,000 and actuals Rs. 1,65,000. The amount budgetted for next year is Rs. 1,80,000. From these figures, it will be seen that the amount actually collected by the Government is far less than that was anticipated in the Preliminary Budget; and the Government anticipates only a smaller amount for this year. Now, there is another curious fact. Excise duty on liquor issued from the Distillery—that is, sub-head 3 Abkari and Ganja, page 5—amounts to Rs. 1,88,743, i. e., accounts for 1099. The budgetted estimate for 1100 is Rs. 2,00,000; actuals Rs. 1,70,000. The budgetted estimate for 1101 is Rs. 1,70,000.

Sir, from these figures, it will be seen that the consumption of liquor—and an idea of it can be formed for the purpose of this debate only on the actual returns or collections—has gone down. The answer may be that there is illicit traffic. But I shall come to the question of illicit traffic afterwards. From the figures before us, it will be seen that the actual collections come down, year by year. Under "Excise duty on liquor from the Distillery", the Government is anticipating the same figures—that is, the same amount—as in previous years. This clearly shows that the Government is not adopting a clear policy in regard to the Prohibition movement. It is all well and good to

say that the Government expects the maximum revenue from minimum consumption. I believe, that has been the watchword in preparing the Administration Reports of previous years also. I suppose that the House is now dealing with the future Excise policy of the State. I admit, total Prohibition is not a counsel of perfection. But, we ask the Government only to adopt it as a goal of our Excise policy.

It is true that, in this matter, we require the co-operation of Malabar and Travancore. If I am speaking upon principle, I dare say if Malabar and Travancore are prepared to allow their subjects to become drunkards, is it a reason for the Cochin State to allow such a state of affairs so far as its subjects are concerned? I am not taking that attitude. What about the negotiations with Travancore and British Malabar, regarding the Excise policy during previous years? If we adopt an Excise policy now, there would come a time when we will have to conduct another negotiation with Travancore and British Malabar. Regarding the Excise policy of the three districts, I am sure, Travancore will join hands with Cochin in pressing upon the Madras Government the necessity to adopt the very same policy in British Malabar also. And it is towards such an end, to bring about such a consummation, that the House should recommend such a policy to our Government.

Then, the question of propaganda work has been raised by the Hon'ble Member for Mulakunnattukavu. I may be allowed, now, to quote an instance. Without the least help from outsiders to carry on propanganda work, Goturutti has requested the Government to abolish the liquor shops there.

Mr. C. ACHYUTA MENON (*Mulakunnattukavu*).

Will the Hon'ble Member kindly allow me to interrupt his speech? I know that place as fully as any other here. It has always been a hotbed of illicit distillation.

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

It remains so even now.

Mr. GEORGE CHAKYAMURI (*Pallivurutti*).

Not at present.

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Mr. C. ACHYUTA MENON (*Mulakunnattukavu*).

Many times, Mr. Brown raided the place to get hold of them. They asked the liquor shops to be removed, so that they might go on with their illicit distillation unhampered.

Mr. N. PADMANABHA MENON (*Cranganur*).

I protest, Sir, that to say that the object of Goturutti people, in asking the Government to remove the liquor shops there is simply to carry on illicit distillation is unsound in principle and defamatory in its effects. If the Government was aware of those facts, why did Government allow the removal of the liquor shops? How many cases of illicit traffic, cases detected by the preventive force, have been brought into courts? I am coming to the case of those brought to the courts. On these, I have to speak a few words. What I submit is that the fact that a shop was taken away from Goturutti in deference to the desire of the people to have the shops removed, is indicative of the changed angle of vision.

President.— Are there other cases in which the people wanted to have liquor shops removed to other places?

Mr. N. PADMANABHA MENON (*Cranganur*).

Sir, I am sorry, I am unable to bring to your notice, other cases; and there is another point for consideration. I understand that, at Ernakulam, within the Municipal limits, all shops were closed. When the town expanded, the shops that were located outside had to come within the area. That is all.

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

Shops had to remain where they were, for want of space.

Mr. N. PADMANABHA MENON (*Cranganur*).

I submit, in Trichur Municipality, the conditions might be different, and an experiment ought to have been tried in that Municipality also.

Secondly, are we to understand, Sir, that with the costly machinery that the member in charge of the department can put into operation whenever he likes, illicit traffic cannot be stopped? I submit, it is like saying that because we cannot eradicate all

the crimes, it is better to repeal the Penal Law. That argument is unsound. As evidenced from the budget discussion here, to rely upon this revenue is to rely upon a broken reed.

Regarding negotiations with British Malabar and Travancore, I have to submit that we must hasten a revision of the policy, and it is for us or Travancore to hasten the time for the revision of the negotiations.

Then, there was a suggestion that ways and means should be suggested for the adoption of Prohibition. I am at a loss to understand what are the ways and means tried or adopted by the department. Of course, a spasmodic effort here, or another there, is not sufficient. What is wanted, after all, is that a definite attempt should be made in that direction. The shops should not be kept open, after a stated hour, say, after six. A definite time might be fixed for the shops, and the punishment for those who violate the Excise law meted out in courts should be more severe. Now, when any illicit traffic is detected and the delinquent brought to court, he is let off with a nominal sum of Rs. 5 or Rs. 10 as fine, and he is rather glad to pay this fine, because he may again make more profits from his illicit trade. The punishment meted out to such persons should be such that a man, once convicted, will not have recourse to it again. Of course, as is said, we do not want the ideal state of things in a year or two; but attempts should be made in that direction. Only after attempts have been made and found wanting, we can have recourse to any other policy and other means. On these reasons, I support the motion.

Mr. A. SANKARA PUDUVAL (*Trichur*).

Sir, I oppose the motion with very great reluctance, because I am in entire sympathy with all practical measures calculated to mitigate the evils of drink. It has become the fashion of the Government to decry this evil. Excise revenue has been the inevitable godsend for the Finance Member; and every year it is looked upon with objectionable eagerness to make up deficiencies in the budget.

But, after all, is there anything very seriously wrong about it? If a man indulges in this immoral practice, there is no reason why he should not pay the

penalty for it, and why that penalty should not be utilised by the State for the benefit of the people. It seems to me that Prohibition, though a very good ideal, is very difficult of achievement. Our main endeavour should be in the direction of endeavouring to reduce the consumption of liquor as far as possible, and I may say the policy of the Cochin State is the same. I am in entire agreement with it. I am inclined to think that this is a question not for the politician alone, but the moral and social reformer as well. The people must be prepared, and willing, to have a reform of that sort introduced in this State.

We hear that the United States of America has gone dry. But, from the reports we read in the magazines and papers published in other countries like England and France, the fact does not seem to be really so. Situated as Cochin is between Travancore and British Malabar, we have to shape our policy according to the Abkari policy of these States. It is no use making experiments of our own in Prohibition, unless we have a similar policy, obtaining in the surrounding States. Even if we go in for Prohibition, a drunkard could easily get his liquor from the adjoining State of Travancore or from British territory. We have to accept the principle which the Government in British Malabar and the Government of Travancore follow. We can usefully do nothing more.

Let me ask: Are the people of Cochin prepared for a Regulation enjoining absolute Prohibition on every one in this State, and making drinking penal? I make bold to assert that we are not prepared for it. Can we sincerely say that the majority of the people are to-day agreeable to the introduction of a law enjoining Prohibition? I think no. Until we arrive at that stage step by step, it is no use trying to introduce measures of total Prohibition or anything of the kind. Any useful method, curtailing consumption of liquor, would be very wholesome and very welcome. It is the duty of the moral and social reformer to see that the demon of drink is exorcised away from the State. And I would go even a step further, and say, reform must come from within the society; our religious teachers and moral reformers must earnestly endeavour to cure

the habit. These inclinations are slowly but may, I think, be surely eradicated. Till then, maximum revenue and minimum consumption is the only way of solving the problem, and inasmuch as the Government is prepared to adopt all feasible methods of reducing the consumption of liquor within the State, this motion is superfluous. We have, I believe, to accept this principle for the time being. I, for myself, would certainly like to have Prohibition in the State; but it is not within the range of practical politics, and with great reluctance, I oppose this motion.

Mr. E. IKKANDA WARIAR (*Urakam*).

I rise, Sir, to support the motion. It is clear from the speeches of the Hon'ble Members, including those on the Government side, that total Prohibition is a desirable thing. The difficulties in the way are suggested to be of an administrative character. If I understand them correctly, the position of the oppositionists resolves itself into this:—In the matter of the introduction of total Prohibition, Cochin, Travancore and British Malabar are interdependent. If we begin it here, it will give rise to a series of acrimonious correspondence between our State and the other countries, besides making it necessary to maintain a large preventive force. I take it that any one of these three countries will have to encounter the same difficulties to drive out the demon of drink from it. Surely, one must begin it. We shall begin it. Then they will have to follow us.

President.—Could not all begin together?

Mr. E. IKKANDA WARIAR (*Urakam*).

Yes, Sir. But if they are not going to do it, what shall we do? Somebody must bell the cat. We now realise that it is an evil. So let us begin it. What do we do when one of the members of our own family contracts the habit of drinking? We do not wait to see his friends converted first, before we take steps to persuade him to stop that bad habit. We find that the majority here is of opinion that the drink evil is a very great one for the whole State and it must be stopped. It consumes about 25 lakhs of rupees. That amount is wasted. Not only that that amount of 25 lakhs is wasted; but much energy is lost, and the capacity for

earning is also lost. So the difficulties, we have to encounter, in putting a stop to it, are nothing compared with the result, we are going to achieve.

What the mover of the motion wants is only that the Government should enunciate that the Excise policy of the State is total Prohibition. I do not say that all the liquor shops in our State should be closed from to-morrow or from the 1st of Chingam 1101. I know that it will take some time to bring about that happy consummation. Necessarily, we have to wait for some time. But that does not mean that we should not enunciate this wholesome policy. Let us, therefore, take courage and begin it and not wait for Travancore or British Malabar to get themselves ready.

Mr. M. KRISHNA MENON (*Vyttila*).

Well, Sir, if I have understood the deliberations of this House correctly, I think, there is absolutely no difference of opinion between the member for Excise Revenue and the non-official members with regard to the future Excise policy of the State.

President.—Do you support or oppose the motion?

Mr. M. KRISHNA MENON (*Vyttila*).

I oppose the motion. With regard to the future policy of the Darbar, as expressed by the Member for Excise Revenue, it is, certainly, towards the goal of absolute Prohibition. With regard to Local Option, we tried it for one year, so far as the Ernakulam Municipality is concerned. I oppose it vehemently, from the experience of one year. There were some shops in the Ernakulam Municipality, scattered here and there. On the requisition of the Municipal authorities, Government removed them outside the Municipal area. Those shops were located in five places, on the other side of the toll-gates. Now, what happened afterwards is that, from 5 o'clock onwards, the drunkards started from the town to the toddy shops, and from 6 to 8 they returned in numbers; and every road except the beach road became unsafe. I had occasion to call the attention of the Police Commissioner to this fact. From 6 to 8, to walk through the roads, except the beach road, became a regular nuisance. Before that, because there were shops in the

Ernakulam Town scattered here and there, drunkards living in the locality would go home safely ; and in one part, namely Vadutala, serious breaches of the peace have occurred after the location of the shop outside the Municipal area. So, that is the good result effected by the removal of the shops, outside the Municipal area, by the Darbar.

With regard to Temperance and total Prohibition, there is absolutely no speech necessary in Karkadagam of the year 1100, because, all over the world, we hear of total Prohibition from Council chambers, platforms and everywhere. But, has any one introduced total Prohibition till this date ?

President.—America.

Mr. M. KRISHNA MENON (*Vyttila*)

In almost every paper we see all sorts of injections as substitutes. Cocaine has been found out to be a very good substitute.

Further, we in this Council are passing a resolution, I say, *ex-parte* (*Laughter*). Absolutely *ex-parte*, because we have not heard what the other side has to say. It is very easy to pass a resolution of total Prohibition by this House. All along, Councils were passing resolutions with absolutely no effect. So far as the present Excise policy is concerned, I must respectfully submit that it would be detrimental to the State to make any change from the policy that is going on in Travancore and British Malabar. We will be only losing our revenue and, at the same time, giving the money to Travancore, which we are entitled to get. There is a decrease in the drinking population, they say, in Travancore, and if so, I say, it is mainly due to the exertions of the most respected Narayana Guruswami. So, it is the duty of the Catholic Church and other similar institutions to work and see that the drink evil is eradicated and drunkards converted into sober men.

President.—That is propaganda work.

Mr. M. KRISHNA MENON (*Vyttila*).

Yes, Sir. What I say is that there is no necessity for a resolution. If people become non-drinking persons, the Government will have to close their shops

and walk home. There will be no necessity for a resolution. Government will have to close all their shops, if nobody goes to drink. Why trouble the Government now? That is my question. If people stop drinking, we need not go to the Government and request them to lay down their Excise policy. They will simply close their office, and the staff will be employed in some other department.

Mr. GEORGE CHAKKYAMURI (*Pallivirutti*).

Sir, I rise to support the proposition. I would not have spoken to-day but for a few mistaken ideas conveyed by some of the Hon'ble Members. I was really shocked to hear that Goturutti petitioned to the Government to take away arrack shops, so that it may carry on illicit manufacture of liquor. I assert that it is a most unwarranted statement which is not supported by any fact. I claim to know Goturutti a little better than the Hon'ble Member from Mulakunnattukavu, and of course, I can say that Goturutti, in days gone by, was addicted to a little drinking as places like Trichur and Mulakunnattukavu. Goturutti found out all the evils that resulted from drinking, as many of the places have already found out, organised itself in the line of temperance and abstinence, and under the able guidance of the Church, they have absolutely given up this evil habit, and, as a culmination of their effort, they petitioned the Government to take away the shops from their place. So, I once more repeat that it is a most unwarranted and defamatory statement on the part of the member for Mulakunnattukavu to say that Goturutti petitioned the Government, so that it can carry on illicit manufacture of liquor.

Well, as regards the statement, which I heard from the Hon'ble Member for Vyttila that it is the duty of the Catholic Church to see that the drinking problem is solved, I say the Catholic Church has done much and is still doing much towards solving this problem. But I quite fail to understand my learned colleague when he says that it is the duty of the Catholic Church alone to combat this drink evil. I should think that it is the duty of every sane Church and every sane organisation to combat this evil, and I think that it is the duty of every Devaswam also.

Mr. M. KRISHNA MENON (*Vyttila*).

They have control only over property. My learned colleague must understand that Devaswams have no control over individuals.

Mr. GEORGE CHAKKYA MURI (*Pallivirutti*).

I cannot understand why the Catholic Church alone should undertake to do this work. But I suppose it is the duty of all organisations, all social organisations, all public organisations to try their level best to combat this evil. With these few remarks, I support the motion.

DIWAN BAHADUR Dr. V. VERGHESE (*Chief Medical and Sanitary Officer*).

Sir, just a few words, in connection with this subject. I consider that Prohibition does not come within the range of legislation or State control. No kind of social improvement or reformation has ever been successfully combated by State regulations. Reformation must come from within, and the need for Prohibition must proceed from the people. The remedy would be to have societies, like the one organised in the Department of Co-operation, by the member from Trichur, to propagate the evils of drink and to create a real demand in the country for a reformation.

✓ **Mr. S. F. NUNEZ**, (*Anglo-Indians*).

Sir, we have one in the Education Department.

Mr. M. KRISHNA MENON (*Vyttila*).

Sir, it must be done by voluntary effort, by voluntary agencies and voluntary missions. Any agencies will be able to produce this reformation; and unless this is done, and the people really see that there is a necessity for this, there is no use crying for Prohibition. I, therefore, consider that it is too premature to ask the State for radical legislative measures, to combat the evil existing in the community.

Mr. T. A. RAMACHANDRA AYYAR (*Nellayi*).

Sir, it was said by the Hon'ble Member for Excise that it is the policy of the Government to minimise temptation. I do not believe it. If their policy is to minimise temptation, I ask, why are all the shops located by the side of the roads, with attractive boards? So, I will be satisfied, Sir, for the present, if all the shops will be removed a furlong or two to the interior, a little away from the roads.

President.— Could they not come to the interior?

Mr. T. A. RAMACHANDRA AYYAR (*Nellayi*).

They can, as well, come to the interior.

President.— Now, since we have got over the difficulty of a deficit budget, I do not think everybody will be for the reduction of the amount.

Mr. C. A. KUNJUNNI RAJA (*Landlords*).

Sir, under S. O. No. 25, I propose that the question be now put to the vote.

Mr. M. KRISHNA MENON (*Vyttila*).

Sir, I second it.

The closure motion was carried.

President.— Now, Mr. Salem, do you want to exercise your right of reply?

Mr. A. B. SALEM (*Jews*).

Sir, as already stated, I want only five minutes to reply. My motion was not for Prohibition, nor for a radical legislative measure, as the Member for Medicine has put, nor for reformation from within by voluntary work or anything of the kind. My motion was to call attention to the existing evil of raising almost Rs. 8,37,000 by way of Abkari revenue out of the vicious habits of the people, and to call the attention of the House and the country to the great drink evil, which draws from the pockets of the population a large sum of money. The total receipts under Abkari and Ganja is Rs. 8,87,000, of which, under Ganja, it is only Rs. 15,175, so that almost Rs. 8,70,865 comes from the sale of toddy and arrack. If it was one lakh more, it would be a rupee per head of the population. We have got a population of 9,79,080 men, women and children included, and we have got Rs. 8,71,865 raised from this abominable revenue of the State, that comes from toddy and arrack. My object was only to call the attention of the country to this great evil, and to make this House say that they will not countenance any such movement, nor allow this evil to continue. If the Hon'ble Member for Excise had the grace to accept this one-rupee cut and to co-operate with the representatives of the people and the voluntary organisations and the reform from within, I would have been more than amply satisfied, and would not have gone for a reduction and opposed the Government, as then they

would have accepted the principle of putting down the evil and of co-operating with the people as much as possible. By opposing this motion, I take it that the Government is opposing every good policy that we bring forward in this matter.

There are various methods to minimise this evil, to eradicate this evil. However surrounded we are with different systems of administration and with different policies, can it be said that we cannot adopt any policy of our own? That is showing our hands up, and saying that we are unable to do anything of our own, and can only be called copyists in future, as we have been in the past. Isolated territories are the best places to carry on the experiment of minimising the effects of the evil of drink. If I had a place surrounded by so many thieves, I would take very good care of my property. In the same way, if I had so many people round me who are tempting me to drink, that is no reason why I should not propose to drive away the shops out of my town. That is a very good policy.

It is not correct to say that every road in Ernakulam is a place for drunken people to quarrel. Certainly, there will be quarrels. That has always been the case, and as the Member for Nellayi said, it should be a very good policy not to allow a single boy to have his eyes set upon a toddy or arrack shop, by removing every shop from his view. Everybody passing by the street, seeing the drunkards quarrel, ask "What is the matter"? You call the attention of the country to it by placing these shops near the road. There is a policy in the Excise Department that the shops must be in crowded localities, so that, by means of the crowd being there, it will deter the drunkard from going into the shops. That is an absolutely mistaken policy. Let the shops be in a far away nook and corner of the place, and let them drink there as much as is to their hearts' content. Those who want to drink will go there and drink. Let it not be publicly known, where the shop is. Let difficulties be put in their way of finding out the shop and of satisfying their vices. Difficulties must be put in the way of drink.

I shall one day send in a memorandum to the Hon'ble Member for consideration, which, he said, will

be welcomed by him. What I am now saying is, do not have your eye on the money you make, and the sooner you do away with this the better for the country. That is all the motion.

I, therefore, press this motion to a division, only to say that we, the representatives of the country, are at one to enunciate the policy of grappling with the situation and finding out means to reduce this evil. That should be the only policy of the Government, and not to do away with the whole department at one single stroke of the pen. We want the House and the Government to say whether they accept the policy, to grapple with the evil with a full heart and with full brains brought to bear upon it. "That it has been the custom to allow drink. So we will go on till the others have become good", is not what I want. I want the Government to co-operate with the people, to grapple with the evil and to tell them "We are not going to stand this evil any more, and we are going to deal with the situation". That is why I have brought a cut of only one rupee. Otherwise, I would have brought a cut of thousands of rupees. I, therefore, press this motion to a division.

The President then put the motion to votes. It was carried.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi*).

We want a polling, Sir,

A poll was taken and the result was as follows:—

For

- (1) Mr. Mathew Koladi Vatakkot
- (2) „ M. K. Raman
- (3) „ T. A. Ramachandra Ayyar
- (4) „ S. F. Nunez
- (5) „ C. A. Ouseph
- (6) „ N. Padmanabha Menon
- (7) „ K. S. Rama Ayyar
- (8) „ K. Sankaran Namburi
- (9) „ A. B. Salem
- (10) „ A. K. Thoma
- (11) „ P. A. Kunju Muhammad
- (12) „ C. A. Kunjunni Raja
- (13) „ Lonappan Chakkola
- (14) „ O. R. Chummar
- (15) „ George Chakyamuri
- (16) „ Ephraim Ambooken
- (17) „ K. P. Karuppan

(18) Mr C. Ittiravi Namburi

(19) „ E. Ikkanda Wariar

Against.

1. Mr. V. K. Kochunni Menon
2. „ M. Krishna Menon
3. „ C. Achyuta Menon
4. „ I. Raman Menon
5. „ K. Govinda Menon
6. „ A. K. Vengu Ayyar
7. „ K. Krishna Pisharodi
8. Sy. T. Madavi Amma
9. Mr. A. Sankara Menon
10. „ V. K. Aravindaksha Menon
11. „ C. Matthai
12. „ A. Eachara Menon
13. Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese
14. Mr. V. B. Vaidyanatha Ayyar
15. „ Sheik Abdul Quadir Sahib Bahadur
16. „ T. K. Krishna Menon

Mr. A. Sankara Puduval, Mr. Chakko Cheruvathur were absent from their seats and Mr. S. S. Koder did not vote.

Motion No. 19.

Mr. A. EACHARA MENON (*Chittur.*)

To reduce the allotment of Rs. 8,000 for T. A. by Rs. 2,000.

Mr. A. EACHARA MENON (*Chittur.*)

Sir, I beg to withdraw my motion, if the Council permits.

The motion was, by leave, withdrawn.

Motion No. 20.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi.*)

To reduce the allotment of Rs. 2,25,000 for Purchase of Salt by Rs. 25,000.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi.*)

Sir,

I move for a reduction of Rs. 25,000 from the total allotment of Rs. 2,25,000 for the purchase of salt. My object in bringing this motion is just to call the attention of the Government to the way in which contracts for the supply of salt are at present entrusted. A sort of monopoly is being given to a foreign contractor for its supply. During the last quarter of a century one Mr. Chettiyar from a Tamil District has been continuously getting the contract. Time after time local merchants and local contractors have tried to get the

contract, but always the contract has been entrusted to this foreigner. At times he has been entrusted at lower rates than those of his competitors; but then, he has been given the choice of accepting at a slightly lower rate. This motion was tabled with a view to call the attention of the Government to this practice. This motion is not based upon any sentiment. It is based upon business. Let our money lie in the hands of our men. Let us not depend upon this Mr. Chettiyar from the Tamil lands for the supply of our salt. There are big merchants in Cochin who will be willing to supply salt. I know merchants from Trichur were prepared to take the salt supply contract; but, after a regular tug-of-war between these, this Mr. Chettiyar was given the contract at the rates proposed by his competitors. That is not a practice which should be encouraged by this House.

President.—Are you referring to what took place this year?

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi*).

I don't exactly know what took place this year. I am told—I am subject to correction—that the contract has already been given without tenders being called for. If there is an assurance that, hereafter, local enterprises will be encouraged with regard to the supply of salt, I am prepared to withdraw the motion.

If tenders are called for, and after tenders are put in, if the old contractor is given the contract at the reduced rate proposed by local men, there is no use of inviting tenders.

President.—Have you any objection to call for tenders?

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*),

Certainly not; further, there has not been a single case where, after calling for tenders, a foreigner was preferred for the same rate. The difficulty all along was for finding contractors.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi*).

Were tenders called for this year for the supply next year?

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

No.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi*).

Has Mr. Chettiyar been entrusted with the supply for next year?

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

Yes.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi*).

That is exactly what I say.

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

If tenders are called for, and if he raises the rate, it will tell upon the public who have to pay a higher price. It is the policy of the Darbar to lower the price of salt as much as possible. This year we think it will be more profitable and more in the interests of the public.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi*).

If I have the assurance, I shall withdraw the motion.

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

I shall be happy to give information. I know, in previous years, tenders were called for and tenders were made. But the contract was given to this Chettiyar for Rs. 93 in Medam last, as his was the lowest rate. Last year the Chettiyar offered for Rs. 72.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi*).

Whatever reduction in the price of salt was effected was through the effort of local tenderers. Mr. Chettiyar was charging a very high rate for salt. But latterly, the price has gone down considerably, because local men were competing.

President.— Hereafter, we will call for tenders.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi*).

Sir, I beg to withdraw the motion, if the Council allows me to do so.

Accordingly with the permission of the Council, the motion was withdrawn.

Motions 21, 22 and 23

Dr. A. G. MENON (*Tattamangalam*).

To reduce the votable allotment for Excise by Rs. 100.

Mr. MATHEW KOLADI VATAKKOT (*Kunnamkulam*).

To reduce the allotment under Excise by one rupee.

Mr. M. K. RAMAN (*Ezhuva South*).

To reduce the total allotment under Excise by Rs. 10,000.

Dr. A. G. MENON (*Tattamangalam*).

Sir, after a conversation with the Hon'ble Member for Excise, I was assured that the question is engaging his attention. In that case, I do not press forward my motion.

The motion was, hence, withdrawn with the leave of the Council.

Mr. MATHEW KOLADI VATAKKOT (*Kunnamkulam*).

Sir, I beg to move to reduce the allotment under Excise by one rupee to point out the necessity of appointing an Excise Committee, as in Travancore and the Madras Presidency, to examine the Excise policy of the Government and to suggest ways and means to reach the goal of Prohibition at an early date. In doing so, Sir, I may point out that, while the Government has been successfully following the policy of recurring maximum revenue, no satisfactory efforts have been made to reduce consumption. In the Financial Statement submitted to this House, it is stated that during the period 1090—1100 "the Abkari revenue increased from Rs. 5,49,955 to Rs. 9,57,631," that is, the revenue has almost doubled itself. I respectfully ask the Hon'ble Member sitting on the other side to prove that consumption has correspondingly decreased, during the period, by 50 %. The Financial Statement and also the speech made in this House by the Hon'ble Member in charge of the department were completely devoid of any definite policy to bring about a corresponding reduction in consumption. There is no use of raising the rates, if no reduction takes place in consumption. Dr. John Matthai in his book "Excise and Liquor Control," published in 1924, writes:—"If the average purchasing power is high, such methods, as raising the price of liquor to the consumer, may not prove effective. On the other hand, where it is too low, the raising of prices may impoverish the consumer, without exercising a corresponding check on consumption." The present policy of the Government

is not, therefore, defensible. As there has not been a reduction in consumption, corresponding to the increase in revenue—to be plain, as no reduction at all worth mentioning has taken place in consumption—the statement that the Government has been following a policy of securing a maximum revenue from a minimum consumption is not correct. The policy has been to derive maximum revenue, without paying any attention to the best interests of the people at large. Does not this policy deserve condemnation, especially, when it is generally accepted that to take revenue from the nefarious traffic in liquor is immoral?

All enlightened Governments have understood that it is immoral and unwise to depend on Excise revenue, but our Government, I regret to say, has not understood it till now. It has been and is following a policy of exploitation with regard to Excise. I may, in this connection, commend to the attention of our Government what Sir A. R. Banerji said, in June last, in his opening address to the Mysore Assembly with reference to the receipt estimates for 1924—1925. "Excise shows a decline of Rs. 2 lakhs, owing to the decrease of consumption under Toddy and Arrack." I ask the Hon'ble Member in charge of our Excise Department whether our budget for 1924—1925 shows any marked fall in Excise revenue. The total revenue from Abkari in 1099 was Rs. 9,35,905, and for 1100 it was estimated to be Rs. 9,51,956, that is, instead of decrease, an increase of about Rs. 26,000. However, due to some unforeseen circumstances, such as floods, a fall in revenue took place. Thank Providence, while our Government follows a policy detrimental to the best interests of the people, Nature comes to our help. Speaking on the budget estimates for 1925—26, Sir A. R. Banerji says:—"There is also a serious shrinkage expected under one of the principal heads of revenue, viz., Excise, under which there is a decrease of Rs. 2,36,000, in the revised, as compared with the budget estimate, to which I have already referred. There is a further anticipated decrease of roughly Rs. 2½ lakhs in the estimates of the next year, under this head. Experience shows that the Excise revenue is steadily coming down, at the rate of about Rs. 2 lakhs every year. This gradual decline (mark these words) has

to be faced in the future years also." Our Government is looking with philosophic calmness, if not with pleasure, on what is happening around. Is our Government aware of what is taking place outside the few square miles of our tiny State? No great statesmanship is required to understand that it is suicidal to depend in future on Excise revenue as a steady source of income.

The member in charge of our Excise Department, in the course of his reply the other day, said that our Excise policy is the same as followed in the Madras Presidency and the neighbouring State, Travancore. I beg to differ, and respectfully submit that our Excise policy, as defined by the Hon'ble Finance Member and the Hon'ble Member in charge of the department, is a policy of amalgamated evils existing in the system of the two other Governments.

I may ask the Hon'ble Member to pay a little more attention than he has hitherto been doing to understand fully the present policy of the Madras Government. The discussion which took place in the Madras Council in March last, with reference to the token motion of Rao Bahadur C. V. S. Narasimha Raju, to omit the allotment of Rs. 21,400 for pay of officers under the head of "Excise Commissioner" (to express want of confidence in the Hon'ble Minister for Education) deserves our attention. In his reply, the Hon'ble Sir A. P. Patro (Excise Minister) repeated—what he had said in his general remarks on the budget—that the ultimate object was Prohibition. He added that the Government had adopted a number of steps suggested by Temperance workers. In Madras there had been removal of strong liquor shops from areas where liquors were available, and where toddy shops existed, removal of arrack shops from five taluks in four districts, closing of shops at the time of fairs and festivals, the closing of shops near work-houses on pay days, Sundays and holidays, the prohibition to sell liquor to a woman or a young man, who ought not to be allowed even to enter the premises of the shops, and the introduction of Prohibition in the Hills, like the Nilgiris, where people wanted to co-operate with the Government. As a result of these measures, there was reduction in the consumption of liquor from 20 lakhs

proof gallons in 1920—21 to 15 lakhs proof gallons in 1923—24 and consequent loss of revenue.

I may point out here that many of these restrictions do not exist in our State and who will be bold enough to say, except the Hon'ble Member in charge of our Excise Department, that we have been following the Excise policy of the Madras Government? The annual consumption of arrack, in terms of proof strength, in the State (see the answer to question No. 4) in 1096 was 39,554 gallons, and in 1098 it increased to 41,108 gallons, and from 38,454 in 1097, it increased to 40,493 gallons. Where is the reduction in the consumption of liquor here, as in the Madras Presidency? Will the Hon'ble Member prove to this House, by facts and figures, his statement that we have been following the Excise policy of the Madras Government, and if he could not, will he be pleased to modify his statement? In the Madras Presidency, to associate people more with the Government in the working of the Excise administration, a scheme had been prepared, under which Advisory Committees were converted into Excise Boards with non-official majorities and with power to elect their own Presidents; and their resolutions would be binding on Government in certain matters. The Hon. Sir A. P. Patro pointed out that all those measures showed that a definite step had been taken for Local Option and Prohibition. Correspondingly to these steps, I now ask the Hon'ble Member sitting on the other side to state what we have done here for Local Option and Prohibition? Is there an Excise Board here, as in the Madras Presidency? Does the Hon'ble Member know that some steps have been taken in the Madras Presidency in constructive Temperance work in the shape of Temperance teaching in schools? Will the Hon'ble Member be pleased to enlighten this House what has been done in this direction in this State? I again ask whether there is any license required in the Madras Presidency, as in our State, for tapping for jaggery toddy. The answer must be in the negative. In the face of all these facts, who will assert that we are following the Excise policy of the Madras Government? I respectfully request the Hon'ble Member, at least, to modify his statement.

Now, let us consider the policy of Travancore and see how far we follow it. I desire to draw the attention of the House, and especially of the Hon'ble Member in charge of the Excise Department, to the Travancore Diwan's address in March last to the Assembly. He says, "A Committee consisting of officials and non-officials was appointed last year to examine the proposals of the Excise Commissioner for promoting Temperance and that Committee has suggested *inter alia* that a reduction of 5 per cent should be made in the total number of shops at the end of each biennial contract". Has our Excise Superintendent submitted any definite proposals for promoting Temperance, as was done by the Excise Commissioner in Travancore? If he has submitted, when were they submitted, and what were the proposals? To follow the Diwan's speech. He says, "Though the Report of the Committee is only being published with a view to invite public criticism, this suggestion has already been accepted by the Government for the current biennial contract, and a reduction of 5 per cent in the number of both abkari and toddy shops was effected at the beginning of the current official year". I should like to know whether our Government has effected a reduction of 5 per cent in the number of both abkari and toddy shops at the beginning of the current official year. The Diwan further said, "In this connection, it is also worthy of note that the consumption of country liquor in the country has been reduced by nearly 52 per cent during the last four years". Will the Hon'ble Member, who said that we are following the Travancore Excise policy, be pleased to prove by figures that our Government also has reduced 52 per cent of the consumption of country liquor during the last four years? I do not think that the Hon'ble Member will attempt to do this impossible task.

I, therefore, respectfully submit that we are following the evils existing in the Excise policy of the Madras Government and Travancore. As was done in Travancore and in the Madras Presidency, I request the Government to appoint an Excise Committee to submit proposals with a view to bring about Prohibition within a practicable period. As the Hon'ble Member in charge of the Excise Department has said that we

are following the policy of Madras and Travancore, I find no ground to say "No" to this request.

മിസ്റ്റർ കെ. ശങ്കരൻ നമ്പൂതിരി (ചെറുതുരുത്തി).

സർ, കുറുകുളം മെമ്പർ മിസ്റ്റർ മാത്യുവിന്റെ പ്രഭാവത്തോടു ഞാൻ പൂർണ്ണമായി യോജിക്കുന്നു. കള്ളവ്യാപാരം കുറയ്ക്കാൻ വേണ്ടുന്ന നടപടികൾ പെട്ടെന്ന് നടത്തേണ്ടതാണ്. ഇങ്ങനെയുള്ള ഒരു വ്യാപാരം ഇവിടെ വന്നു കയറിയതുകൊണ്ട് പലവിധത്തിലുള്ള തകരാറുകളും വന്നുപോകുന്നുണ്ട്. അതു മുഴുവനും നിയമംകൊണ്ട് നിർത്തൽ ചെയ്യണമെന്നാണ് അഭിപ്രായപ്പെടുന്നത്. അതിന് ആവശ്യക്കാർ കുറഞ്ഞുവരാതെ പെട്ടെന്ന് നിർത്തൽ ചെയ്യാൻ സാധിക്കുകയല്ലെന്നു പറയുന്നത് ശരിയാണെന്നു തോന്നുന്നില്ല. നാട്ടിൽ കള്ളവർ വന്ന് കടൽ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നതിനെ നിയമംകൊണ്ട് തടയുന്നില്ല?

തിരുവിതാംകൂറിലും ബ്രിട്ടീഷ് മേഖലയിലും കള്ളവ്യാപാരം നിലനിൽക്കുകയാണിരിക്കുമ്പോൾ ഇവിടെ തടയാൻ നിവൃത്തിയില്ലെന്നാണ് ചിന്ത ചെയ്യുന്നത്. അതും ശരിയാണെന്നു തോന്നുന്നില്ല.

അവിടങ്ങളിൽ കള്ളവ്യാപാരം നടത്തുന്നതുകൊണ്ട് ഇവിടെ കൃത്യമായ വ്യാപാരം നടക്കുമെന്നു പറയുന്നത് പിന്നീടുള്ള സംശയം. കൃത്യമായ പരാതികൾ ആവശ്യമുള്ള പക്ഷം ഒരു സാർട്ട് സെന്റർ വെച്ചുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കാം. ഈ വ്യാപാരം തടയാനുള്ള മാർഗ്ഗങ്ങൾ എന്തെല്ലാമെന്നും ആലോചിച്ചു അത് ഉടൻ ഗവണ്മെന്റ് നടപ്പിലാക്കേണ്ടതാണ്. പലവിധത്തിലും നാട്ടുകാരുടെ ധനം നശിക്കുന്നുണ്ടെങ്കിലും കള്ളുകടിക്കാനുള്ള സൗകര്യംകൊണ്ടാണ് അധികവും എന്ന് എനിക്ക് തോന്നുന്നു. അതുകൊണ്ട് ആ വ്യാപാരം കഴിയുന്ന വേഗം കാര്യമായിട്ടെങ്കിലും നിർത്തൽ ചെയ്യാൻ വേണ്ട ഏർപ്പാടുകൾ ചെയ്യണമെന്നുള്ള അപേക്ഷയോടുകൂടി ഈ പ്രമേയത്തെ അനുമതിപ്രദമാക്കുന്നത് ഞാൻ ഈ പ്രസംഗത്തെ അവസാനിപ്പിച്ചുകൊള്ളുന്നു.

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

Sir, I have not much to say. I have already stated what our Excise policy is. Several statements were made by the Hon'ble Member for Kunnamkulam to the effect that my statement that we are following the the Excise policy followed in Madras and Travancore is not correct. I say, emphatically, that all the measures taken in those places to check the drink habit have been taken here also. It is said that because Local Option is permitted in some select places in the Madras Presidency, but is not allowed here, therefore, we are not following the Excise policy followed there. The Hon'ble Member himself admits that this permission was granted only very recently, that is, two or three months ago. There was, therefore, no time to

see the effects of the innovation. Unless the result of this innovation is found to be satisfactory, we cannot consider even the advisability of its introduction here.

Mr. MATHEW KOLADI VATAKKOT (*Kunnamkulam*).

In Travancore, a Committee was appointed by the Government to examine the Excise policy of that Government. Why is it that nothing was done in this State?

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

The Committee was appointed as the result of a resolution in the Legislative Council, but here there was no Legislative Council till now, and no demand was made for the appointment of any such Committee by anybody. The Hon'ble Member said that, in Mysore, with the decrease in consumption every year, there was also a decrease in revenue, but that here that is not the case. There is nothing strange in what is happening here. The decrease in consumption here is due to the raising of the tree-tax and of the duty on arrack. This accounts for the increase in revenue with the decrease in consumption. It is not known whether the Mysore Government is also gradually raising the tree-tax and the duty on arrack, as is done here, and the Hon'ble Member does not say that it is done there. It is true that the consumption of arrack in 1098 and 1099 was a little in excess of that in 1096 and 1097. But the consumption in 1096 was much less than that in 1095, and the consumption in 1097 was also much less than that in 1096. The consumption in 1099 was also less than that in 1098. This variation is due to the fact that we cannot expect the consumption to go down always, but, generally speaking, it is going down gradually, every year. Almost every year, we are increasing the tree-tax and the duty on arrack, and that is why our revenue goes up, though consumption goes down. I may say, however, that for next year there is a deficit of nearly a lakh of rupees, when compared with the receipt of this year.

It is next said that, because the Travancore Government is reducing the number of toddy and arrack shops by five per cent every two years, and we have not been doing so, therefore, the policy adopted in Travancore is not followed here. In Travancore the

independent shop system with regard to toddy and arrack has not been introduced throughout, till last year. It was the farming system that prevailed there, before the introduction of the independent shop system, and under the former, there were several superfluous shops. That Government has therefore to reduce the number of superfluous shops. But here, the independent shop system has been introduced throughout, long ago. The superfluous shops, therefore, which existed at the time of the farming system, were done away with, along with the introduction of the independent shop system. We have, therefore, not many superfluous shops to be done away with, now. We have reached almost the limit. I am, however, directing my personal attention to this matter, before the auction sales every year. Even this year, certain shops have been done away with.

Mr. A. B. SALEM (*Jews*).

Have you found any shop to be absolutely necessary in any place? (*Laughter.*)

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

Yes, in some places.

Mr. MATHEW KOLADI VATAKKOT (*Kunnamkulam*).

May I know, Sir, whether the proposal for the appointment of a Committee will be accepted by the Hon'ble Member?

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

I welcome it. I, certainly, do not stand in the way.

President.—That is not what the member wants.

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

I have no objection and I am ready to co-operate.

Mr. A. B. SALEM (*Jews*).

We do not find fault with the department, but with the policy of making people drink. May I know, Sir, whether there are any rules for the closing of shops at the time of fairs and festivals?

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

I am not aware of any such rules.

Mr. A. B. SALEM (*Jews*).

May I know from the Hon'ble Member whether he is aware that that rule existed in Madras for the last three years?

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

No, not in all places. On the other hand there are rules, both in Madras and here, for the opening of special shops, during the time of fairs and festivals.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi*).

I know in some places new shops were opened at the times of festivals.

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

No.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi*).

Sir, I have a word to say in respect of this motion. It is proclaimed by the Hon'ble Member that the policy of the Darbar is to derive maximum revenue out of minimum consumption, that they are closing down shops, that they are trying to reduce the drink evil generally. Sir, will the Hon'ble Member please explain why on occasions of festivals, such as the Trichur Pooram (and this is true of several places), new shops are opened in the localities? I know that, during the last Pooram in Trichur, a toddy shop was newly opened near the Civil Hospital for Pooram purposes. What I would, therefore, say is that the Government is inviting people to drink by putting temptation in their way. That is a practice which should not be encouraged.

Mr. C. ACHYUTA MENON (*Mulakunnattukavu*).

There is no secrecy about it.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi*).

Let us take it that the Government admits that drink is not a necessity, that their attempt is to reduce it, and that they supply drink on the ground that drink, when necessary, will be got elsewhere even if Government ceases to supply. I ask where the people who come for Trichur Pooram will get drink from, if there are no shops there. It is clear from the practice that is being obtained during the last two years, that the policy of the department is to put temptation in the way of, and not to take temptation away from, the people,

not to prevent illicit distillation and other breaches of law, but to supply for the people large quantities, so that they may drink to their hearts' content.

President.—Any other member wishing to speak?

Mr. CHAKKO CHERUVATHUR (*Vadakkancheri*).

Sir, in regard to the policy regarding jaggery tapping, the Hon'ble Member, Mr. Govinda Menon, had put in a cut. But I want to draw the attention of this House to the policy followed by the Excise Department with regard to jaggery tapping. Jaggery tapping, as I stated before, in the general discussion of the budget, has been discouraged by the department, which has been putting all sorts of impediments in the way of jaggery tappers getting their licenses. This has resulted in a decrease in the income from jaggery tapping. The figures, I stated before, are the actuals of 1097, the revised estimates of 1098 and 1100 and the budget estimates for 1099 and 1101.

The actuals from 1096 onwards, so far as I could ascertain from Government records, are the following:

1096	...	Rs. 8,244
1097	...	" 7,788
1098	...	" 6,902
1099	...	" 7,090

The general decrease in the income from this cottage industry bears ample testimony to the spirit of discouragement evinced by the department in its development. All sorts of impediments are placed in the way of the jaggery tappers obtaining their licenses. The grant of licenses to them is postponed to the fermented toddy licensees. The Hon'ble Member for the Excise Department was telling us, the other day, that jaggery tapping was not discouraged. But I make bold to differ from this statement, and assert that it is sorrowfully discouraged. Whether it is with the knowledge of the Hon'ble Member or not, all sorts of corruption have crept into the service. The poor jaggery tappers expected that their miseries would come to an end by the appointment of a teetotaler as the Head of the Department, who had ably and successfully served the Police, Magisterial and Judicial Departments of the State. The answer given by the Hon'ble Member that 'Government is not aware that the system has been causing great distress to the

tapping communities of the Chittur and Talappalli Taluks is a death-knell to their fond expectations. The desire expressed by you, Sir, that the Heads of Departments and the non-officials should co-operate with each other in the administration of the State can be realised only if the Departmental Heads feel that questions are honestly and *bona fide* put by the non-officials, for the purpose of obtaining information, regarding the real state of affairs, and not with the intention of testing their dexterity in answering questions, as some of the answers seem to suggest. We must understand that the 7,213 actual toddy-tappers of the State are, every one of them, labourers who are, from the very nature of their profession and status in life, totally unable to remedy their grievances by applying to the authorities concerned. Any petitioning on their part will be sure to bring down upon them the wrath of the subordinate officers, who are sure to drag them to a Criminal Court for no offence whatever on their part. If they do not dance attendance upon them at the time of obtaining licenses, their license itself is likely to be cancelled, or, at least, he is likely to obtain the license only after petitions and representations to the Head of the Department, which may last for 6 or 8 months, by which period, it will be time for him to think of obtaining the license for the next year. By this time he would have spent enough also to sell his poor homestead, if he has one, by his sad attempt to obtain justice.

The Hon'ble member on the other side was telling us, the other day, that it is the fault of the tappers themselves that they do not apply for the grant of licenses for all the ten trees which a person is allowed to tap at one time. We all know that we do not like to have an evil imposition twice a year. Persons lounging in easy chairs in palatial buildings cannot realise the hard terms imposed by the subordinate staff of the Excise Department upon these poor, illiterate jaggery tappers, most of whom depend upon this industry for their daily food.

From my personal experience, I can assert that the following are some of the impositions to which the poor toddy-tappers are subject at the hands of the subordinate staff of the Excise Department.

(i) They never recommend the T. T. Form of the jaggery tappers till all the fermented toddy-tappers are supplied, so that the trees that were being tapped till the end of Karkadagam go barren by the time they get their licenses at the end of Chingam or in the middle of Kanni.

(ii) They have certain *mamools*, which must be satisfied, before the T. T. Forms are recommended and licenses delivered, which come to 6 or 7 times the amount which the Government realises for jaggery tapping.

(iii) They have certain seasonal *mamools*, like the *Onavazhakkula* or *Aratiyantharam* of the jenmie's, which have to be supplied during fixed seasons.

(iv) They treat it as a family vocation so that any person whose ancestors were not tappers is not given license for tapping.

(v) The license for tapping ten sago trees or twenty cocoanut trees, to which a person is entitled, is granted only in three instalments, so that the unpleasant imposition is repeated to its full extent three times a year.

(vi) On account of the refusal of the Excise Officers to grant jaggery licenses till all toddy-tappers are supplied, the jaggery tappers have very often to apply for toddy licenses in order to save their trees, already under tapping, from going barren. The stoppage of tapping for 10 or 15 days will make a sago barren. The fee for jaggery tapping is half a rupee, whereas that for toddy tapping is 6 rupees per sago tree. This exorbitant amount is paid, in addition to the other *mamools* stated above.

These are only some of the ways in which they have contributed their quota towards strangulating the jaggery industry. They have further got their own methods of imposition upon the fermented toddy tappers, of which I am only glad. For, in this case toddy would be costly and intoxication discouraged.

Upon a consideration of all the above circumstances, I am inclined to think that the Aminadarship of Kunnamkulam, at least to my personal knowledge, can

be sold in public auction along with the toddy and tobacco shops of the locality, and a good round sum realised to the Sirkar.

It is when matters have come to such a pass that the astonishing statement was made by the Hon'ble Member for the Department that Government have no information about the corruption prevailing among their subordinates. If the Hon'ble Member means the technicality of the absence of a petition by the aggrieved people, I have already stated the reasons for it to be the ignorance, illiteracy and poverty of the victims concerned.

The answer given by the Hon'ble Member for the Excise Department to the question put by the member for the Ezhuva North constituency, as to the desirability of making jaggery tapping free, is also most dispiriting to the encouragement of this home industry. The answer that it is doubtful whether the time has come for introducing this measure bespeaks, to say the least, that the member wants our State to be far behind the British Districts in the encouragement of this industry. The statement that the continuance of the imposition of the license is to prevent illicit toddy tapping speaks very ill of the working of the preventive force in the department, whose strength, as I find from the budget, is nearly 6 peons to every Aminadar, making up a total of over 180 peons. The introduction of free jaggery tapping and the removal of the disabilities noted above will surely make the preventive force do outdoor work daily, while at present they are sleeping in their decent homes, collecting their *mamools*. This will also enable the poor subjects of His Highness the Maharaja to purchase Cochin jaggery for their *Palaharams* cheap, instead of foreign jaggery, and will help in protecting and reviving a cottage industry, for which many a poor hut of the tapping community will raise their chorus of praise to their Creator.

In the reply given by the Hon'ble Member, he has promised that further enquiries will be instituted, and I am sure, if he takes into his confidence respectable and well-to-do gentlemen of the localities concerned or the members of this Council with regard to the respective

constituencies they represent, he is sure to understand the real state of affairs. For my part, I have not lost hope in the disciplinary powers of the Hon'ble Member, and I, on behalf of the tapping community of this State, request that those powers may be forthwith put into execution in order to save them from the consequences of belated grant of licenses and other grievances under which they were labouring till now, with or without the knowledge of the Head of the Department.

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

With or without the knowledge of the Head of the Department. That is quite unwarranted and unpardonable.

Mr. CHAKKO CHERUVATHUR (*Vadakkancheri*).

Then, I withdraw that.

Mr. V. B. VAIDYANATHA AYYAR (*Superintendent of Excise Revenue*).

It is not a question of corruption. What I said was that, if the Hon'ble Member had brought to my notice a single instance, I would have dismissed the subordinate then and there. (*Hear, hear.*) The people whom I question will never admit all these things to me. On the other hand, they find fault with me, for disturbing their relationship. Not a single case has been brought to my notice. The Hon'ble Member did not bring any case to my notice. I expect that a few cases will be brought to my notice.

Mr. CHAKKO CHERUVATHUR (*Vadakkancheri*).

I shall try to bring some cases to your notice.

President.—If you come across such cases it may be duly brought to the notice of the Superintendent.

Mr. CHAKKO CHERUVATHUR (*Vadakkancheri*).

All jaggery tappers are treated like that. I can prove it to the hilt. Not one jaggery tapper is given his license until something is given to the Aminadar. It has become a *mamool*, as a matter of fact, to the department. That is the trouble which all these poor labourers are put to. They take the ornaments from the necks of their wives and children in the nasty month of Karkadagam and mortgage them and give money to the Aminadars. But then, the difficulty is

this. When they apply for licenses, they will not have money and they cannot get licenses for two or three months to come.

President.—There are superior officers to whom appeal should be made.

Mr. CHAKKO CHERUVATHUR (*Vadakkancheri*).

By the time redress comes from superior officers, two or three months will elapse.

President.—Let them take immediate steps.

Mr. CHAKKO CHERUVATHUR (*Vadakkancheri*).

It is for redressing their grievances that we have assembled here, in this House. The matter must go to the Head of the Department. I bring this to the notice of this House, as it is incumbent upon the Head of the Department to enquire into all these things. He must make enquiries in the proper quarters.

Mr. N. PADMANABHA MENON (*Cranganur*).

I propose that this motion may now be put to vote, under S. O. No. 25.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH (*Chalakkudi*).

Sir, I second it.

The closure motion was carried.

Mr. MATHEW KOLADI VATAKKOT (*Kunnamkulam*).

If a Committee will be appointed to go into the whole question, I shall withdraw the motion.

President.—The question will be considered.

On that assurance, the motion was withdrawn with the permission of the Council.

President.—From the progress that we have made by the last six sittings, I do not think that we would be able to finish our business by the next Thursday. We will have to hold one more sitting, that is, on Friday. At any rate, we shall settle the matter on Thursday.

The Council was then adjourned for the holidays till Thursday.